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Narrative of Technology Use from Older Media Generations in Romania

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Abstract
Research on information and communication technology (ICT) and studies on aging revealed that, despite initial assumptions of technophobia among older adults they actually embrace ICT when perceived as beneficial for their specific needs, for example, to stay connected with loved ones. Considering the current technological era and the transformative impact of social media and the new communication and information devices upon the way generations consume information, it is only logical for research to focus on exploring the unique characteristics of the information used within each group. In addition, there is a scarcity of data coming from national statistics regarding the prevalent utilization of ICT among older adults, coupled with a growing significance of exploring generational media consumption in light of their unique historical and cultural context. Therefore, the current paper exposes the usage narratives and particularities of older media generations in Romania, based on qualitative research conducted in February-July 2021 as a part of a larger doctoral project. 18 respondents aged 52 to 79, 8 males and 10 females, took part in 17 family interviews exploring the complex dynamic between modern technology use and the historical and cultural space occupied by different generations. Results show that these two generations prefer the technology that appeared during their formative years and matured while the generations also matured and use the technology that appeared after their formative years only because of external motivation (working environment, keeping in touch with loved ones that use a different technology).

Keywords
older audiences; technology; interviews; media generation; technology use.

Introduction

Media, which is present in every aspect of the life of the modern individual, has emerged as the main cultural, historical, and ritualic mediator in this century (Aroldi & Colombo, 2013). However, the research emphasizes that information consumption varies across individuals in a society due to aspects such as age, gender, social status, ethnic group, income, family composition, as well as geographical, psychological, and behavioral factors (Chaney et al., 2017; Cruz & Karatzas, 2017; Schewe & Noble, 2000). Even though preferences in consumption shuffle when it comes to most of the factors mentioned above, research highlights that age along with formative experiences encountered when people were a certain age (encompassing several cultural, geographical, and psychosocial factors at once) are the most relevant aspects to consider when defining a consumer group (Chaney et al., 2017; Higgins, 1998; Rentz & Reynolds, 1991). This relatively homogenous group is frequently acknowledged as a *generation* (Bolin & Skogerbø, 2013; Higgins, 1998; Schewe & Meredith, 2004).

In the current technological era (Grinin et al., 2017), research indicates that different generations consume information differently (Siibak et al., 2014). These different generations should be considered according to two criteria. The first criterion should address the age groups and how age groups grow older, meanwhile the second should regard how different age groups grow older differently due to their geographical,

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historical, cultural, and psychosocial particularities (Bolin, 2016; Leung, 2013; Opermann, 2014; Tapscott, 2008).

The current research landscape of generations is divided into two large and apparently mutually exclusive approaches: the globalized approach considers generations as the same all over the world since one overwhelming effect of media is to equalize societies (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2009; Edmunds & Turner, 2005); the regional approach departs from the idea that generations differ from region to region owing to historical, cultural, political, social and psychological factors that act differently from one country to another (Aroldi et al., 2011; Bolin & Westlund, 2008; Schewe & Noble, 2000). The present paper is grounded in the regional approach, but, in doing so, discusses media as a landmark that can define and influence visible limits (boundaries) between one generation and the next. (Aroldi et al., 2011; Vittadini et al., 2013) . One of the main arguments sustaining this approach is, that, despite media devices being nowadays accessible to almost everyone anytime, the moment they entered households and became affordable and accessible to many differs even in neighboring countries (Bolin, 2014).

Studies focusing on generational behavior, as Siibak et al. (2014), pointed out that there is an evident increase in media consumption from generation to generation (Leung, 2013; Tapscott, 2008; Williams & Page, 2011), as generations change. Previous studies are often stressing how the older generations may present resistance to new technologies (Leung, 2013), but there is also evidence showing that older adults choose to use ICTs if they are of use to them (Ivan & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2017). While many studies focus on understanding older adults' behavior concerning their resistance to new technology and factors that determine usage patterns (Fernández-Ardèvol & Ivan, 2013; Ivan & Hebblethwaite, 2016; Šimonová et al., 2017), the current paper aims to shed light on how older media generations in Romania choose to incorporate ICT in their everyday life.

Context

To understand what triggers a preference for certain types of devices and media, a closer look at the media grammar theory should be considered. Gumpert and Cathcart (1985) compare technology use with language grammar, explaining that we learn multiple languages throughout our lives, which also transfers to what happens with devices, as we become familiarized with using multiple devices throughout our lives. Considering that people tend to decode the environment using their native language (the one learned during formative years), Gumpert and Cathcart (1985) draw a parallel when discussing the understanding and usage of ICTs. In their view, people will tend to decode the environment using the information provided by their „native" ICT – or at least they seek to find devices and functions that will deliver the information in familiar formats, similar to those encountered during formative years. Other research confirms that habits acquired during formative years most likely will live on throughout our lives (Rentz & Reynolds, 1991), including practices and manners employed in handling media and media devices (Bolin, 2016; Opermann, 2014).

In Romania, national statistics deliver little to no information about the common use of ICT divided by the age of the population (INSSE, 2021c), which makes it hard to explore generational preferences over the years (see Figure 1).

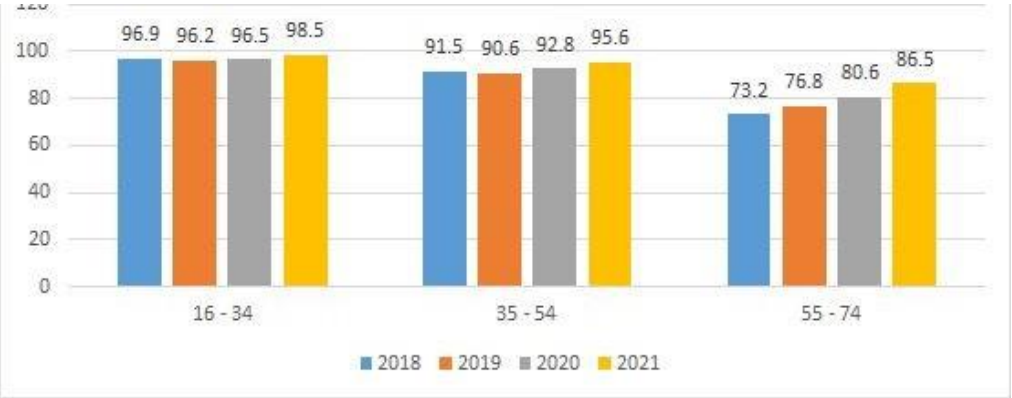


Figure 1. The usage of the Internet among different age groups, based on data about individuals who have accessed the Internet within the past three months - 2018-2021
(INSEE, 2021, c)

It follows that spotting the generation's preferences and deepening knowledge about their communicational needs, ways of interacting with and handling media and communication devices has to rely on data gathered elsewhere Available international longitudinal studies that investigate how older adults make use of today's information and communication technologies (Loos et al., 2019) indicate that Romanian older adults predominantly consume traditional media but they also show signs of adopting and preferring new media, from wave to wave. A comparative analysis of the usage of instant messaging platforms (like WhatsApp) on the mobile phone in 2018, involving older adults aged 60 to 85+ in several countries reveals that (Figure 2) the percentage of older adults welcoming newer information and communication technologies in their homes clearly widely differs from country to country. Studying generations in relation to their ICT and media preferences should therefore be conducted independently from previous studies, as there are regions where, due to context particularities, results will be different across the same age group.

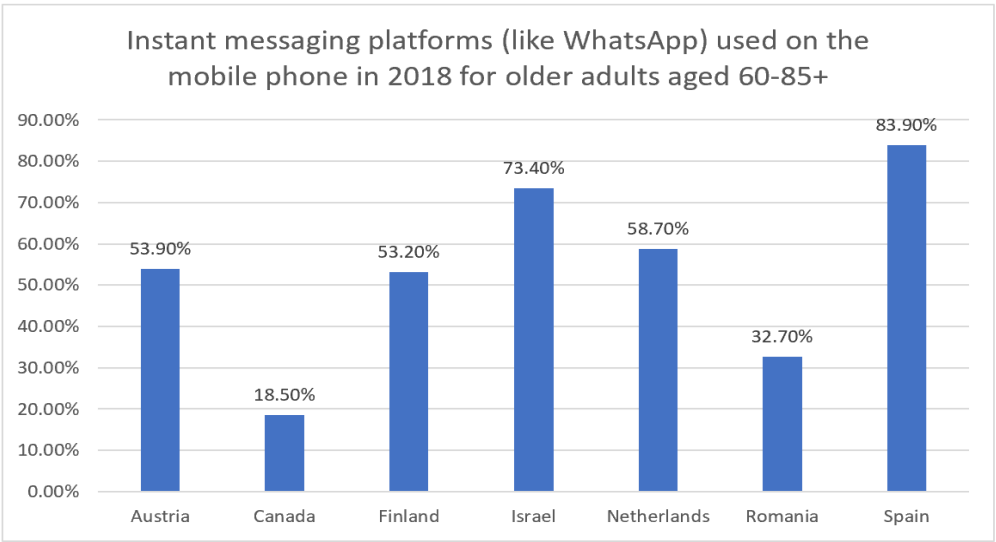


Figure 2. ***Instant messaging platforms used by older adults aged 60-85+ on mobile phones***
(Loos, Nimrod, & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2019)

The present study proposes an exploration of the narratives of technology use by older media generations in Romania, to shed light on how these generations incorporate ICT in their everyday life. In doing so, it investigates personal histories with media devices and takes into account the media context specific to their formative years. As a first step, a timeline that follows the media landscape comprising relevant ICT devices used in

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Romania during the last decades is provided. In addition, by exploring the media landscape, the study also accounts for social context which fostered generational development (Bolin, 2014). Considering that the estimated life expectancy for the general population in Romania is 72.4 years (*Statistics | Eurostat - Life Expectancy by Age and Sex*, 2023), the analysis will encompass technologies available since the 1930s.

Before the 1930's societies at large were already somewhat accommodated with media like newspapers (Delcea, n.d.), the telegraph (Jurian, 2011), and early electricity sources (Murgescu et al., 2012), with documented usage of radio broadcasting in Romania, and especially in Bucharest since the second decade of the last century (ANCOM, 2011; Jurian, 2011; Moceanu, 2021). As a broadcast medium, the radio acquires a prevalent role both before and during the communist regime (Moceanu, 2021; Neag, 2010), being used to distribute information both by official sources as well as by entities whose broadcasts were declared illegal and therefore, banned (Tuzu, 2014). Despite radio being a constant and relevant presence in households across Romania for decades, in recent years, statistics show that the number of radio devices decreased from 86.1 devices in 100 households in 2008 to 62.3 devices in 100 households in 2020 (INSSE, 2021a).

Access to television services was limited for a long period, even though the Romanian Television Society started its activity in 1956. Functioning on a reduced capacity (with an average of 21 hours a month broadcasted during its first year of activity - ANCOM, 2011) and experiencing various shortcomings specific to censorship, as well as to a slower expansion of the electricity grid across the country (Murgescu et al., 2012) – television services, although popular, were not widely available. In 1970, during a prosperous economic time, there were only 1.5 million registered users across the country, in 1970 for a population of (TVR.ro, 2012). Although data are scarce, the power cuts imposed all over the country during the 1980 and lower budgets allocated for TV original productions or imported movies from other parts of the world did little to improve the situation. After the fall of the communist regime, public television experienced a decline in audience viewership, as private broadcasting companies gain more popularity (Creţu, 2017). Currently, the average number of television devices per 100 households in Romania is approximately 1.7. (INSSE, 2021a) which proves the popularity of this device and a largely available infrastructure.

A similar situation is encountered as far as the adoption of the telephone goes: the landline extends slowly before the second world war (Jurian, 2011), with no reliable data available about how, when, and where the general population had access to this type of service before 1991 (ANCOM, 2011). With the liberalization of phone services during the 1990s (ANCOM, 2011) and mobile phones entering the market around 1992-1996 people's perceptions and usage of this communication medium rapidly changed. Initially targeted to businesses and businessmen (Arsene-Bărbulescu, 2010; Ujică, 2020), the spread of mobile phones and mobile phone technology raised between 2000 and 2010 as it encompassed wider functions and increased coverage (Arsene-Bărbulescu, 2010).

Computer usage has a difficult take-off and few data are available to research to fully understand how its adoption took place and what were the main factors influencing its presence in the professional and personal lives of the general population. A national plan to encourage computer purchasing by the general population has been implemented in 2004, indicating an increased popularity of the device and a higher perception as to its utility Even so, in 2007, only 46% of urban households and 11.9% of the rural households report to own a computer (INSSE, 2018). It follows that, 20 years ago, older

participants in the current study were aged 32 to 59, with at least a part of them susceptible to having encountered a computer during their later formative years.

Internet service entered Romania in 1993, being first adopted in domains related to research and academia. and, later on, around 1997 started to be used in households and business facilities (Redacţia, 2013). Statistics show that household use of the Internet raised from 33.6% in 2007 to 84.8% in 2020 in urban areas and from 3% in 2007 to 69.7% in 2020 in rural areas (INSSE, 2021b).

Keeping in mind when and how various media devices and communication technologies were largely adopted by the general public is relevant to better understanding the factors at play when exploring respondents' narratives that are accompanying patterns of ICT use and media consumption, among older generations. It is important also to remember that, although at present all the investigated technologies are used by older members of the current research sample, not all of them were adopted when first being available to the general public.

Method

The present paper is part of a larger doctoral research that has been conducted in Romania, both online (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and offline between February and July 2021. A total of 17 families (N=56) were interviewed after submitting an online form representing their formal, informed consent to participate in this research. Out of the total number of participants, (N=56), this specific paper takes into consideration responses from participants between 52 and 79 years old (N=8 male respondents and N=10 female respondents), as they represent the older generation.

A mix of instruments was used, as follows: (1) a short biography that helped with collecting sociological data and also facilitating the process of remembering details that have been subsequently discussed during the interview (Ratzenböck, 2016); (2) a semi-structured interview (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017) and (3) a Google Jamboard frame that had a role in shaping (Yang et al., 2021) the current media ecosystem (Hanna et al., 2011) and assess respondents' media diet (Andersen et al., 2016).

Recent data published by the Institute for National Statistics shows (Iagăr, 2021, p. 41) that there is a visible increase in technology usage among the oldest age group in Romania. However, the current breakdown in data gathering comprising only three large age categories (16-34 years old; 35-54 years old, and 55-74 years old) makes it difficult to spot differences and nuances since people in their fifties are still professionally active and more likely to use multiple devices than people in their seventies, whose life circumstances are different and who could experience more difficulty in accessing technology. The family interview technique (Eggenberger & Nelms, 2007) has the advantage to allow for a heterogenous group to interact with the researcher, based on a shared background. Additionally, by introducing a technography technique (Kien, 2009) within the interviews, one had the opportunity to follow the placement of ICT in family everyday life and to assess how ICT intertwined in common use but also in the usage by each member of the household. Also during the interview, another technique used to gather information was the technobiography (Ching & Vigdor, 2005), which enables discussions over the history of personal intersection and interaction with a device over the course of the years, covering also evolutions and changes of various device categories. Last, but not least, the walking interview (Ratzenböck, 2016) technique was also employed to facilitate data gathering based on the previously mentioned techniques,

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as a walking interview implies moving around the household (either physically or virtually, using the camera) to explore all the existing technological devices and services.

Interviews have been recorded and then manually transcribed. The resulting transcripts and data gathered through Google Jamboard frames have been analyzed using Atlas.ti software for qualitative data (Friese, 2019).

Results

Based on their short biography, respondents pointed out the age interval when different devices entered their household. In Figure 3, where respondents are ordered by age, it is pointed out how devices entered households at different paces All respondents were exposed to radio and TV usage before the age of 25 years old, and, in addition, few of them already had a landline connexion as well. Computers and the Internet entered their lives, meanwhile, in the case of the younger generation, there is a gap of several years between the adoption of PC usage and Internet usage. Older respondents had between 35 to 44 years old when adopting the said technologies and devices, which puts them past their formative years and made them experience two different technologies as being inherently linked together. Further exploration of this finding could reveal relevant insights when it comes to understanding why and how older generations are using new technologies.

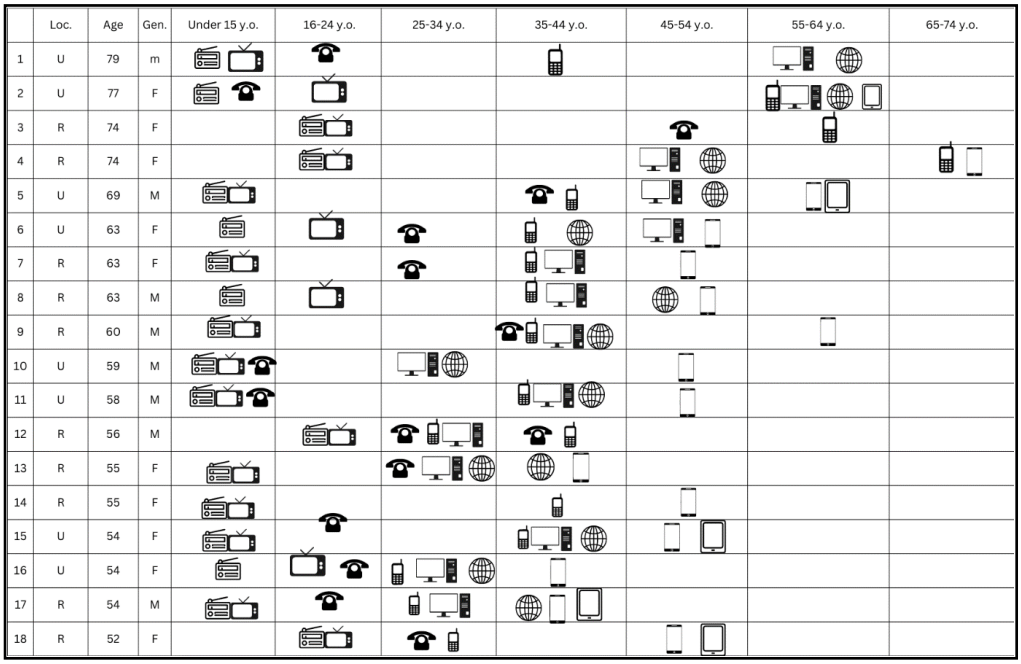


Figure 3. Age interval when devices entered the respondent's household
(Data gathered during research, via short biography responses)

As shown in Figure 3, mobile phones are linked with computers in terms of being available in households. The tablet appears to be the device that entered last and that is least present. As data from interviews show, the fact that a device was present in a household does not necessarily mean that it was in the possession of a respondent, a fact that is worth remembering since it applies also to personal items (such as the mobile phone) or to items that, for a long time had a shared usage amongst different members of the household (the computer). Data in Figure 3 also reveals that participants 1 to 5 (P1 = 79 years old, male, P2 = 77 years old, female; P3= 74 years old, female; P4 = 74

years old, female; P5= 69 male) were introduced to ICT during a longer period than younger participants to the study, aged 63 to 52. A particular case is Participant 9 (60 years old, male) who was exposed to all the new ICTS – landline, computer, Internet, mobile phone, as an adult (35-44 years old) and decades later to a smartphone (55-64 years old). smartphone, but access to a mobile device appears to have happened simultaneously with the Internet, computer, and landline. Experiencing a shorter time lapse between so many new devices entering the household accounts not only for the social and economic environment but also points toward different usage patterns and experiences.

Data resulting from short biographies point toward to main division of respondents, based on mixed criteria – age and availability of media in one's household. The first group is formed from P1 to P5 (aged 69 to 79) meanwhile the second is composed of P6 to P 18, aged 52 to 63 years old. In correlation with the larger research, it makes sense to refer to these two age groups as being representative of two different generations. Further studies (both quantitative and qualitative) are necessary to pinpoint the eventual boundaries between these generations and to assess their permeability.

Looking further into the gathered data and combining technography as a technique and Google Jamboard as a tool for data sorting and visualization, valuable information about older generation media diet (Andersen et al., 2016). has been acquired. This information also points towards the two generations, visible across the same age boundaries that were above mentioned.

The Google Jamboard frames, which enabled the technography technique, allow for analyzing their current media use with the digital devices composing their daily media diet Results (Figure 4) indicate that respondents belonging to the second age group (age 52 to 63 years old) are using not only more devices than their older counterparts (age 69 to 79), but they are also using them differently.

Apps	Laptop	Radio	Smart phone	movable landline	Mobile phone	TV
Call			1	1	2	
Camera			1			
Clock			1		2	
Facebook	1					
Facebook Messenger			1			
Base functions		4			3	5
Gmail	1		1			
Instagram			1			
SMS			1		1	
Weather			1			
Waze			1			
WhatsApp			1			
Youtube	1					

Apps and devices used by the older adults aged 69-79 years old

Apps	Laptop	PC	Radio	Smart band	Smart phone	Tab	TV	smart TV
Call					12			
Camera					8			
Clock	1				6			
Facebook	2	1			7			
Facebook Messenger	1				6			
Base functions			7	1	2		8	5
Gmail	5	2			4			
Google Maps					1			
Linked in	1				1			
Microsoft Teams	1	1						
Netflix								3
Skype	1							
Slack	1				1			
SMS					10			
TikTok					1			
Weather					6			
Waze					6			
WhatsApp	2	1			11			
Yahoo	1				3			
Youtube	1				3	1		1
Zoom	1				1			

Apps and devices used by the older adults aged 52-63 years old

Figure 4. Media diet of older adults aged 69-79 and 53-63
(Data gathered during research, via short biography responses)

The arguments regarding their current media diet come from their habits of using ICT across their formative experiences. Relating to the short media devices timeline presented in the first part of this article, the older group (69-79) is the one who was exposed for the longest time to the emergence of the devices. Yet, they prefer to stay

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faithful to devices encountered before turning 25 years old. If radio, landlines, and newspapers have been largely available to the general public since before this generation was born, it is television that took a particular place in their preferences. In respondents' stories, there is a marked difference between experiences during the communist regime and their remembrance of media usage after 1990. Needless to say that more circumstances have changed socially, culturally, and economically from one period to another which could easily explain differences in media consumption. It is also worth mentioning that, when talking about past events, older generations are, by default splitting their memories and discourse between these two large time frames, that they refer to as before Ceauseşcu and after Ceauseşcu.

This generation has an increased consideration for their devices and the device value, as it was very hard to have access to it. Respondents' stories expose the considerable efforts put in, to buy the devices, as they are also mentioning the important role that they played in the community, as a factor that enables gathering and also acquiring prominence amongst one's peers:

> „My parents bought it. Both the radio and the TV. My father worked at a factory, he had a leadership position, and through acquaintances, he bought the TV. And all the neighbors from the whole street used to come to us to watch the two hours Ceaușescu allowed us to have, my dad would take the TV out by the window and people would sit on benches and watch. My mom would bake a bucket of donuts, another neighbor came with a pie, and everyone would drink wine and watch TV. (P2, female, 77 years old, urban area)".

The activity of watching TV seems ritualic and brings up a sense of celebration, with small reminiscences of negative feelings towards the limited amount of time that shows and movies were available (most people are remembering the time when the national television was broadcasting only two hours daily due to constraints imposed by the communist regime.

There also appear to exist great differences between rural and urban areas in having access to various media devices. As the electricity grid was extending at a low pace, meanwhile people were eager to have access to information as well as to entertainment provided by TV and radio services. Gathered data shows that there is a 10 years delay between TV services available in rural areas as compared to urban areas, which seems to be consistent with the low development of infrastructure.

A solution frequently mentioned by the respondents was to use a battery radio, that could partially answer people's needs to stay informed and be entertained. Two older adults in this age group remember the moment electricity was brought home with great effort and after a long waiting.

> „I was about 20 when my husband brought home a TV. He came during the night with a driver. He was so proud, you see, we didn't have electricity on our street (N.R. - 1967). And when we got electricity, he brought it home right away" (Female 74 years old, rural area)

> "Yes. In the 60'… we bought the [battery] radio in 64' when we were like this [without electricity, N.R.] and then… we had no electricity and in 66' we had electricity there and we also got radio and TV" (Female, 74 years old, rural area)

During the communist regime, the landline telephone used to be accessible mostly for the benefit of the companies and institutions, and less and more difficult for the public

use, at home. For some participants in this study, the low degree of access to ICT before the fall of the communist regime, and in its immediate aftermath due to economic hardship, triggered an acceleration in adopting new devices and new technologies, in rapid succession after being able to afford older ones (e.g. there is a shorter period between having access to a landline at home and adopting mobile phones):

> „During Ceausescu's dictatorship, we only had landline telephones at work, because at home it was very hard to receive approvals and installation. After the Revolution, we had a landline for maybe two years? After that, we bought mobile phones […]Oh, it's a whole story. For the first time, they gave us the computer: here, use it. I was scared to open it. I was scared not to destroy it. But where I worked, we had an IT team and, with their help, with my daring questions.". (Male, 69 years old, urban area)

Nowadays, this generation is still somewhat fearful of experimenting with new devices and strongly prefers to keep on using the ones they already know how to use. The television stays one of the favorite channels of information, as it provides both news and entertainment, in a format that is highly valued. The radio still plays an important role around the house, for example doing chores in places and spaces where a TV won't fit and when working outside, in the garden. The landline telephone was replaced by the mobile phone received via children and/or grandchildren, but which, in most cases, couldn't be replaced by a smartphone.

> „It has buttons so that I could… with this one… I tried, but no… I tried with the one my grandson gave me, but I couldn't, I returned to my buttons" (Female, 77 years old, urban area)

Technography and also technobiography shed light on some unchanged behaviors related to mobile phone use, that are inherited by the previous usage of the landline. For example, respondents report that they use the phone at home rather than keeping it inside of their pockets, when they leave the household, as it feels right to them to not expose the device to danger. There is an evident detachment from the device, an impersonal use preference, which shall only be activated in case of emergency. Also, mobile usage is similar to landline usage, which was linked to usage inside the household. However, further research is needed to uncover how older people perceive these devices and handle them by taking into consideration their daily activities and environment: for example, gardening is incompatible with keeping a phone in one's pocket and fear of pickpockets (widely spread across older people) can account for leaving their mobiles at home when going to the market or the supermarket.

Regarding the use of the Internet and other related technologies, only one respondent reports using a computer and Internet services via a laptop and a smartphone. Even though two other respondents recall working with computers during their professionally active years, retirement faded their interest in this device, as it was assimilated only to work and with no effect on their personal life. These respondents have in common the fact that neither of them prefer this source of information but used it when inevitable.

For the younger age group (52 to 63 years old) the dichotomy between the times before and after Ceausescu is similar to the one experienced by the previous generation, on a different intensity. This generation grew up with TVs and radios bought by their parents or they met them in the neighborhood. Some respondents even experienced the landline telephone to a degree that indicates higher accessibility to the general population. This generation recalls experiencing fear during the communist period, a sense of living in

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continuous terror, but they also feel nostalgic about the simplicity of those times. They largely discuss being deprived of goods and experience, but, at the same time, they report feeling overwhelmed with all the possibilities available today.

Childhood in communist times meant listening to music and to news on the radio, as well as watching movies and cartoons on TV. In smaller, more intimate groups at home, people would listen to the radio station declared illegal by the regime, namely Radio Free Europe, where the realities of the era were exposed. This forbidden activity provoked strong physical emotions among some respondents:

> „It was scary, it was forbidden and it scared me, my heart would beat very fast". (P13, Female 55 years old, rural area)

During the communist times, the community united when facing hardships and the media plays an important role in making them gravitate together around the cultural elements presented there. For this generation, the get-togethers to consume media is also present when it comes to listening to the radio (*"We used to gather outside the fence and listen to the radio in the dark with peers. It was so beautiful"* – female, 52 y.o., rural area) but also when it comes to watching TV for sports games, movies, and cartoons, even though it was available only for two hours a day.

> "I remember I didn't have a TV at home, and we gathered to watch TV at a neighbor's house. If you wanted to see a movie, you would have to gather multiple people to do that. We only had two hours a day and we also tried to catch the Bulgarians". (Male, 54, rural area)

Respondents point out often that the TV had its own place, in the *good room* (basically a guest room or living room)and that touching it or acting up around it was forbidden, as every user knew that these devices were expensive and rare to find and easy to break up. Nowadays, this generation owns more than one TV set: some of them keep one in almost every room of their household (the maximum number of TV within a household is 6), meanwhile others have an additional TV in the kitchen, besides the one staying in the living room. People prefer using the TV for longer periods, from a few hours a day (N=5) to the entire day (N=5). The radio is also a constant medium and appears to be frequently used in the car (N=8), as a movable media stream (N=4) for keeping company while doing chores (N=4).

Regarding landline access when they were younger, respondents from this generation report having access to landline services at home (N=3), through neighbors (N=3), and via public telephones (N =7). The landline was used to also for personal interest, to keep in touch with family, and to circulate news related to family events. Using a phone implied a lot of planification beforehand, as reaching out otherwise would have been impossible.

After the communist regime ended, a majority of the respondents belonging to this generation were already part of the working force and the new job market that emerged, together with economic shifts, determined challenges that forced them to adopt new technology devices faster.

One of the devices that has been adopted at high speed, and whose adoption was met with a degree of anxiety, was the mobile phone. The respondents recall that landline access was difficult even after the communist era ended and that a few years after, society already adopted mobile phones. Even though it was not a sudden transition, leaving their comfort zone was not easy. Nowadays, most of the respondents also transitioned to smartphones, enjoying the benefits of easy Internet access via WhatsApp

(N=9), Facebook, and Facebook Messenger (N=6), and being in contact with family (N=3), friends (N=5) and business partners/colleagues (N=6). This generation prefers having permanent access to their device (N=5), but it doesn't mean that they necessarily permanently use it (N=4).

Other media adopted with a degree of anxiety and in circumstanced forced by economic context were the computer and the Internet. Most respondents recall encountering a computer for the first time at work (N=6), where the device played a great part in accomplishing work-related tasks. When computers reached the household, they had an entertainment purpose at first (N=4), enjoyed both by the respondents and their children. Nowadays, computers are used by respondents that are still active in the job market and oftentimes are mentioned only as working tools. The computers once used for entertaining purposes have been replaced with smartphones:

> „The computer… not really, no. Because I don't have to anymore. I mean, before I needed the computer, it was a necessity but now… since I can do everything with my smartphone, I don't really [use it]". (Male, 54 years old rural area)

The Internet is closely connected to computer use, as its emergence in households is usually linked to the device that was primarily used in accessing it. However, when speaking about them, they seem to be two distinct objects: the Internet and the device used to access it, as the Internet appears to be something they access for reading (N=1), online shopping (N=2), for using apps (N=2) or e-mail (N=3).

Conclusions

The two mentioned generations follow through with two different timelines: a time under Ceausescu and a time after the Revolution. But the generations have been affected differently in this period, as the fall of communism came with new rules at different stages in their lifetime. Even though the generations have been exposed to the same devices across their lifetime, the moment when these emerged differed enough to make some users more likely to adopt them and others more likely to reject them.

The two generations identified through the current study refer to their past experiences with media and communication devices by recalling the same division line in their personal timeline and personal narrative. Both of them recall a time during the communist regime and a time after its downfall. However, the impact of these two periods varied for each generation due to social, cultural, and economic changes that they experienced at different stages of their lives. Although both generations have been exposed to the same technological devices throughout their lives, the timing of their emergence into their life differed significantly, resulting in some individuals being more inclined to embrace new devices and new technologies, while others were more inclined to resist them.

The demarcation of generations is not rigid, and attempting to precisely define the years that mark the beginning and end of a generation can be flawed due to varying contextual factors experienced by individuals. Discussing a fluid boundary between generations implies also that we discuss not necessarily people's ages, but their experiences and their patterns of usage when it comes to employing different media and communication devices, including ICT. This aspect of fluidity is also a byproduct of tools, methods, and techniques used for the current investigation that is grounded on qualitative research. Nevertheless, qualitative studies provide compelling evidence that media language and conventions do indeed impact usage preferences and adoption rates. The respondents

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tend to gravitate toward technologies that are easier for them to learn while showing resistance towards technologies that require a new learning process.

Based on findings from the current study, the results support the idea that two distinct media generations are to be encountered in people aged over 55 years old, among the general population in Romania. Respondents belonging to the older generation (P1 to P5) may be referred to as the Radio-TV generation, as they predominantly rely on radio and television as preferred sources of information and have a specific usage and perception of ICT. On the other hand, the younger generation (P6-P18) could be referred to as the TV-PC generation: it displays a stronger inclination towards television and experienced the usage of computers during their formative years.

This is only a tentative definition, as further research is needed to investigate potential changes that may arise within the second age group (the TV-PC generation) concerning media, computers, and the Internet as it can also provide valuable insights into how media conventions influence technology usage through different life stage.

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